

Remarks on Disaster Assistance in Los Angeles, California February 28, 1998

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to begin by thanking Congressman Gallegly, Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, Congressman Sherman, and Gloria Molina and Zev Yaroslavsky for joining me here.

I have just met with some of the people who were hurt by the terrible weather you've had in southern California over the last week, as well as a number of the people who were involved in the rescue effort. Let me begin by saying that our hearts and prayers are with the families who lost their loved ones. I especially want to send our condolences to the families of Officer Rick Stovall and Officer Brit Irvine who gave their lives in the line of service as they responded to the emergency in Santa Maria.

There were many people of all ages who lost their lives in this terrible tragedy. I received a fax from a friend of mine yesterday whose son lost a childhood friend of his, a young fellow student. I met a young woman in there in the meeting who lost her fiance after he had saved the lives of a woman and her three young children.

There is very little that anyone can say at this moment to ease the human loss. We do know that the weather we are experiencing now has been dramatically aggravated because of El Nino. I have visited with families in Florida where 39 people were killed in the worst tornadoes in 50 years, in northern California, and now here today.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has spent a lot of time in southern California in the last 5 years and couple of months since

I've been President. I talked with James Lee Witt in some detail before I came down here today. We are determined to do all we can. FEMA is responding swiftly to provide disaster relief funds in 35 counties, including over \$2 million more for Glenn County. The SBA has an outreach office in Orange County, and Federal Highway Administration personnel have already released \$40 million to California for road repairs.

There will be a lot more to be done. The Members of Congress and the local officials have talked to me about other things that we need to do to deal with the particular problems of people who lost everything or who are still at risk of further natural calamities.

Let me just say today, I want more than anything else to praise the courage of those who worked so hard during this disaster—the fire, the police personnel, the emergency personnel, all the others who were involved; many of them risked their lives, and as we know, two lost their lives—and to praise the courage of the people who have lost everything they have but still have their lives. I want to encourage them, to tell them their fellow Americans are thinking about them, and to pray for tranquil weather as we begin the rebuilding process.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. on the tarmac at Los Angeles International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gloria Molina and Zev Yaroslavsky, members, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; and California Highway Patrol officers Rick Stovall and Brit Irvine.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles February 28, 1998

Thank you very, very much. First I want to thank all of you for being here for Senator Boxer and for your country. Thank you, Senator Torricelli, not only for being here and for your leadership on behalf of your fellow Democrats in the Senate and some of the people we hope

will be joining us, but for always being willing to stand up and fight for what you believe in and not just standing—[*applause*—]thank you. The longer I stay in Washington, the more I come to appreciate people who will stand up and fight. And I thank you, Senator. [*Laughter*]